



Interview Summary: Global Affairs Canada Panel (Marta Morgan, Cindy Termorshuizen, Joseph Comartin, Martin Loken, Sébastien Beaulieu)

This witness summary should be read in conjunction with Global Affairs Canada (GAC)'s institutional report.

The panel was interviewed by Shantona Chaudhury, Yves Côté, and Dahlia Shuhaibar on August 23, 2022. Questions relating to this summary should be directed to Ms. Shuhaibar.

Text contained in [square brackets] are explanatory notes provided by Commission counsel to assist the reader.

Background

GAC has a broad mandate that, in addition to foreign affairs, includes international trade and international development. It supports three ministers: Minister Mélanie Joly (Foreign Affairs), Minister Mary Ng (International Trade), and Minister Harjit Sajjan (International Development). A deputy minister is assigned to each minister.

Marta Morgan is the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs ("DM Morgan"). In this role, she performs various management functions and plays a major role in the development of foreign policy. She provides advice to Minister Joly and to the government on the issues falling within her purview. An important part of her mandate is the management of bilateral relations. The Canada-US bilateral relationship is a key mandate and a unique relationship, in which the Canadian Embassy in Washington plays a significant role.

Cindy Termorshuizen is the Associate Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs ("DMA Termorshuizen"). She supports DM Morgan on various matters, including human resources, finance, values and ethics, and development of foreign policy.

Joseph Comartin is the Consul General at the Detroit Consulate ("CG Comartin"). He has been in this role for four years. Trade is a key issue for the Consulate.

Martin Loken is the Deputy Head of Mission (Foreign Policy & National Security) at the Canadian Embassy in Washington ("DHOM Loken"). He works closely with Ambassador Kirsten Hillman, who leads the network of missions in the United States and provides strategic advice to the Canadian government.

Sébastien Beaulieu is currently the Director General of Security and Emergency Management ("DG Beaulieu"). During the relevant period, he was Executive Director of the US Relations Division, which entailed various foreign policy and trade functions. The Canada-US relationship was central to his mandate.



Roles of the Panel Members in January and February 2022

DM Morgan indicated that during the relevant period, the events in Ukraine occupied much of her time. For that reason, she delegated management of the Convoy events to DMA Termorshuizen.

DMA Termorshuizen oversaw GAC's response throughout the events of January and February 2022. She attended the Deputy Ministers Operations Committee ("DMOC") meetings on behalf of GAC. The Office of Protocol [which is responsible for providing services to the diplomatic community in Canada in accordance with Canada's international and domestic legal obligations] reports to her. As a result, she was aware of issues that missions in Ottawa were experiencing and raised these issues at DMOC meetings.

DM Morgan and DMA Termorshuizen explained how GAC and its US network of missions are fully integrated in that they manage foreign affairs, trade and development responsibilities, and follow a "whole-of-government" approach to bilateral relations with the US.

CG Comartin was heavily involved in managing relationships with US stakeholders during these events. He noted that the Canada-Michigan relationship is very important, as Michigan is Canada's key trading partner in the US. He was contacted by various US stakeholders, including elected officials and industry representatives. These stakeholders expressed serious concerns about the border blockades and various levels of impatience with Canada's perceived slow response in dealing with the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge.

DHOM Loken managed relationships with US stakeholders as well. He indicated that, as a result of the pandemic, he had already been involved with issues dealing with the management of the Canada-US border before the events related to the Convoy.

DG Beaulieu was involved in developing GAC's daily reports and "media roll-ups" throughout this period, which were shared with the offices of all three ministers and other GAC officials.

GAC's Involvement in the Events

DM Morgan indicated that in the early days, GAC was not significantly involved in responding to the demonstrations. Its initial involvement consisted mainly of situational awareness. GAC's involvement became more pronounced once the border blockades began.

DMA Termorshuizen had some early involvement given her supervision of the Office of Protocol. That office was paying attention to the events due to its responsibility for the



security of missions and sent an initial communication to them on January 28.¹ She stated that at a certain point, a decision was made to convene the DMOC meetings more often; normally it meets approximately once per week, but sometimes, as here, it is repurposed for crises and meets more regularly.

DM Morgan explained that a key issue for GAC and the government is the functioning of the Canada-US border: the movement of goods and services, trade relationships, etc. It is very important to ensure that Canada maintains a reputation as a safe place to invest and as a strong trade partner. One of Canada's critical assets, from a trade and investment perspective, is its proximity to the US. Canada's proximity to the US means that a well-functioning border is a requirement, and very significant consequences arise when the border does not function well. DMA Termorshuizen added that GAC is always mindful of protecting Canada's reputation as a good place to invest. The "Buy America" trend and talk of "bringing manufacturing back to America" were concerns for GAC and for the Government of Canada as a whole. Loss of confidence in Canada as a good place to invest resulting from a long-time shut down of the border would have very serious repercussions for Canada.

[The Washington Embassy's media relations team prepared daily updates summarizing statements, social media posts by US politicians, and "copycat" protest activity in other countries.²] DM Morgan noted that statements were released by Governor Gretchen Whitmer (Michigan), the Teamsters Union, the Canada-US Business Council, and others. DMA Termorshuizen stated that GAC was watching "copycat" protests very closely, including a large one in New Zealand. She explained that these protests were inspired by events in Canada and had the potential for reputational risk to Canada. GAC was also monitoring concerns about the convoy expressed in its diplomatic network and how these events were being interpreted abroad. DG Beaulieu and DHOM Loken added that there was talk of a convoy in the United States that would seek to disrupt the Superbowl and the President's State of the Union address.

CG Comartin, DHOM Loken, Ambassador Hillman, and other GAC officials also spoke with various US officials. [These included Senator Gary Peters (Michigan),³ Congressman Dan Kildee (Michigan),⁴ Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence (Michigan),⁵ Senator

¹ SSM.NSC.CAN.00000153_REL.0001.

² See, for example, PB.CAN.00000045_REL.0001, PB.CAN.00001042_REL.0001.

³ PB.CAN.00000035_REL.0001 contains a readout of the conversation between CG Comartin and Senator Peters on February 10.

⁴ SSM.NSC.CAN.00000135_REL.0001 contains a readout of the conversation between DHOM Loken and Congressman Kildee on February 10.

⁵ SSM.NSC.CAN.000000145_REL.0001 contains a readout of a conversation between CG Comartin and Congresswoman Lawrence on February 11, and SSM.CAN.000000465 contains a readout of a conversation between Ambassador Hillman and CG Comartin on February 15.



Sherrod Brown's office (Ohio),⁶ and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell.⁷] CG Comartin and DHOM Loken heard from the US officials they spoke to that they were very concerned about the border closures—particularly the Ambassador Bridge. They pressed CG Comartin and DHOM Loken for updates about efforts on the Canadian side to clear the blockades and timelines for doing so. They made clear that the border closure was a major issue with consequences for the transportation of essential goods and for the automotive sector. One such official pointed out that the blockades were undermining Canada's efforts to promote itself as a dependable trading partner for the US. Another emphasized how the blockades were ultimately hurting working, middle-class Canadians and Americans.

CG Comartin heard similar concerns from business stakeholders, including the Detroit Regional Chamber, the Original Equipment Suppliers Association, and the Motor Equipment Suppliers Association.⁸ He noted that those associations were very concerned that it did not appear that anything was happening at the national level in terms of emergency measures. CG Comartin responded that it was unlikely that the Prime Minister would use the *Emergencies Act*, which he understood to be the case based on media reports.

[DG Beaulieu received an update from the Minneapolis Consulate on February 15 indicating that two agricultural commodities companies, Scoular and Puris, had expressed concern about the blockade at the Emerson/Pembina crossing, and that General Mills had noted supply chain disruptions resulting from the Emerson and Coutts crossings.⁹] DG Beaulieu did not recall how these issues were resolved but noted that they were specific examples of the problems that people were facing at the blocked ports of entry. He added that the Convoy events occurred at a time when there was already a hypersensitivity with supply chain issues given the disruptions from the pandemic, flooding in Western Canada, etc. In fact, there had been a national supply chain summit organized by Transport Canada and Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada in early 2022 in which a number of Canadian ministers participated.

⁶ PB.CAN.00000056_REL.0001 contains a readout of a conversation between Senator Brown's office, Stefano Maron (First Secretary, Congressional Affairs, Washington Embassy) and Michael Holmes (Public Safety Counsellor, Washington Embassy) on February 11.

⁷ PB.CAN.00000050_REL.0001 contains a readout of a conversation between CG Comartin and Congresswoman Dingell on February 11.

⁸ PB.CAN.00000035_REL.0001 contains notes from a February 10 call between CG Comartin and members of the Detroit Regional Chamber. SSM.NSC.CAN.00000043 contains a readout of that call as well as readouts of conversations with the Original Equipment Suppliers Association and Motor Equipment Suppliers Association on February 11.

⁹ PB.CAN.00000067_REL.0001, p 8.



The panel was asked about the involvement of the Rapid Response Mechanism (“RRM”) Canada in these events. DM Morgan described RRM Canada as a small group within GAC that was set up to fulfil a commitment Canada made at the 2018 G7 Summit in Charlevoix, Quebec, to address foreign state-sponsored interference. Its mandate is to examine issues around disinformation, particularly state-sponsored disinformation that could have an impact on democracy or democratic institutions. It looks at open source information, particularly on the internet and social media, and shares information with its G7 counterparts. [RRM Canada produced reports during this period, including on February 13,¹⁰ 14,¹¹ 15,¹² and 16.¹³]

The panel was also asked whether Minister Mary Ng, whose portfolio includes international trade, had been involved in Convoy-related issues. They were unable to ascertain the full extent of her involvement.

Effect on Embassies

Canada has obligations towards foreign missions located in Canada under the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations* (“*Vienna Convention*”). DMA Termorshuizen noted that there are roughly 8,000 foreign diplomats across the country. She explained that Canada has a number of responsibilities under the *Vienna Convention*, which include ensuring the security of diplomats, missions, and diplomats’ residences and ensuring that diplomats can access the physical premises of their missions and residences.

GAC, and in particular the Office of Protocol, heard from diplomats working at missions located in the downtown core of Ottawa who felt unsafe, had concerns about accessing their missions, experienced disruptions while working in their premises (noise, traffic, etc.), and had concerns about activity around their residences. DG Beaulieu noted that the Office of Protocol sent three information circulars¹⁴ to missions throughout these events. These circulars advised missions to contact the RCMP for protective policing concerns.

DMA Termorshuizen explained that GAC takes security concerns expressed by missions very seriously, just as Canada would expect other countries to do for Canadian missions abroad. Such concerns would not normally be elevated to the ministerial level. When asked whether the concerns expressed by missions were elevated to the ministerial level in this instance, DMA Termorshuizen stated that they were not but that she raised the issue at DMOC meetings. While she would not have been privy to specific concerns

¹⁰ SSM.NSC.CAN.00000151_REL.0001.

¹¹ SSM.NSC.CAN.00000169_REL.0001.

¹² SSM.NSC.CAN.00000170_REL.0001.

¹³ SSM.NSC.CAN.00000193_REL.0001.

¹⁴ SSM.NSC.CAN.00000153_REL.0001, SSM.NSC.CAN.00000154_REL.0001, and SSM.NSC.CAN.00000155_REL.0001.



raised by missions with the RCMP, DMA Termorshuizen understood that the concerns were not that someone might breach the physical premises; rather, they were related to the security of mission staff attempting to access their premises in downtown Ottawa.

DG Beaulieu noted that Canadian diplomatic missions located abroad were also affected by the events. Protests occurred outside of some missions, and at least one consulate in the US (the Dallas Consulate General) closed temporarily following threatening messages.¹⁵

Effects on Canadian Economy and Reputation

DG Beaulieu stated that GAC did not do its own analysis of the economic impact of the border blockades. However, it was clear that there would be a significant economic impact given the amount of activity known to occur on the Ambassador Bridge (about 25% of Canada-US trade by road goes through that bridge). DM Morgan indicated that GAC's assessment of the impact was more focused on the supply chain (given, among other considerations, the significant integration of the Canada-US automotive industry) and reputational consequences of the closures.

DMA Termorshuizen explained that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the resulting border measures implemented in the previous two years has given GAC a fairly granular understanding of the impact that border disruptions can have on various stakeholders including the trucking industry and health care workers. She expressed the view that the blockades and protests unequivocally had a negative impact on Canada's reputation internationally at the time. Certainly, there were immediate economic impacts due to the border blockades preventing the movement of goods and services. The more difficult question is the long-term implications: how other countries would view Canada in terms of being a reliable trading partner and a safe place to invest as a result of these events.

The panel members were asked about the reference to trading partners (plural) in the *Explanation Pursuant to Subsection 58(1) of the Emergencies Act* [the federal government's formal explanation for its invocation of the Act]: beyond the United States, which other countries had concerns? DM Morgan noted that many countries invest in Canada and that the events could have long-term impacts on potential investment from key trading partners in the future. Canada's proximity to the US is critical to Canada's attractiveness. However, the panel members were not aware of specific concerns raised by countries other than the US. DMA Termorshuizen added that although the obvious supply chains being affected were between Canada and the US, it is not possible to know who owns the companies who are using transportation routes, etc. As goods going to the US from Canada may be part of large supply chains, it is quite possible that the blockades might have had an impact on trade with other countries having commercial relationships with the US. DMA Termorshuizen also mentioned that this type of "down the line" impact

¹⁵ PB.CAN.00000067_REL.0001, p 1.



would not necessarily generate expressions of concern to GAC, but could instead later translated into business decisions.

CG Comartin noted that another bridge, the Gordie Howe Bridge, is currently being built between Windsor and Detroit and that it is expected to enter into service in the next several years. He observed that had there been a second bridge while these events were unfolding, the impact would likely have not been so significant.

GAC's Involvement in Government Response

DMA Termorshuizen explained that GAC's main contribution to the federal government's response to the protests was sharing information about what it was hearing from Canadian missions abroad and US stakeholders, and what it was picking up through its media and social media tracking. This sharing was done in particular through the DMOC meetings.

In DMA Termorshuizen's view, the measures under the *Emergencies Act* addressed GAC's concerns about trade and Canada's reputation by allowing Canada to reassure investors and trading partners that Canada was taking action to ensure border crossings were open and that it was a safe and reliable trading partner. She further added that the duration of the events was a source of concern. In this respect, the invocation of the *Emergencies Act* proved helpful in assuaging doubt about Canada's ability to keep trade corridors open. DHOM Loken stated that he was able to point to the *Emergencies Act* as evidence that Canada was taking the issue seriously. He added that the Embassy did not have to defend the decision because the decision did not attract criticism from the US government. DG Beaulieu described the US reaction as one of relief that a solution was in sight. The invocation of the *Emergencies Act* also signaled to the investment community and others that Canada is a good place to do business. CG Comartin was similarly able to point to the measures to show that all three levels of government were working together to address the issues. The panel agreed that GAC interlocutors who had raised concerns with them were by and large satisfied once the border protests, particularly the Ambassador Bridge protest, were cleared.

DMA Termorshuizen was not aware of any measures that were taken under the *Emergencies Act* to address the situation of missions specifically. However, as missions were experiencing many of the same issues as other individuals and businesses in the downtown core, the measures taken by law enforcement and others to clear the protests effectively addressed the missions' concerns.

DMA Termorshuizen does not recall GAC being involved in discussions about when to revoke the *Emergencies Act*.